CRITICAL DIGEST

May 4,1953 Vol V No 34 505-5th Ave,NYC $10 year T.M.Kraus LY 9-2826 MU 2-0326

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre

New York Theatre This Week

Pulitizer Prize in Drama will be announced at Columbia University 5/4/53. Will-Inge's Picnic or Arthur Miller's The Crucible expected to win award as "the original American play which represents in marked fashion the educational value and power of the stage,dealing with American life."

Can-Can- Shubert 5/8/53. Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin present new Cole Porter musical with book by Abe Burrows. Lilo, attractive French newcomer makes her Broadway debut as a madam who teaches a once conservative judge what life at Montmartre during the 1890's is really about. Cast directed by Burrows includes Peter Cookson, Erik Rhodes, Gwen Verdon and Richard Purdy.

Current Theatre Reviews

The Grass Harp-Circle in the Square 4/25/53. Six NY daily critics covered the Greenwich Village opening, and Times, Mirror and Eagle reviewers recommended it.Remainder okayed most of acting and production of group's revival of Truman Capote's play which flopped last season on Broadway, but stuck to their original opinion that author failed in capturing the magical quality of the novel. Clarice Blackburn,Frederic Downs, Ray Stricklyn and Ruth Attaway shared praises in cast directed by Jose Quintero. Shanley,Times, noted downtown theatre gained fresh prestige through this thoughtful and tender production,especially tailored to the arena theatre. Though Coleman,Mirror,thought some of the lesser roles were too stridently played,he did compliment the leading players,and the delightful,charming moments of the script. While not an equal of Summer and Smoke, which ran a year at arena theatre, he did okay evening as interesting. Sheaffer,Eagle,believes play done in the intimacy of central staging gains in personal urgency and feeling,though it loses some of its magical,fabled quality. Kerr,Herald Tribune, and Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun,blamed elusive,vague script for evening's failure. Arena staging does not improve bad points of a script,explained Rice,Post,who believes failures of this work become more glaring staged this way. Drama editor feels director over extended himself on the use of the pause to establish mood atmosphere. Pat Brooks in role of Maude criticized for copying Geraldine Page's voice pattern and mannerisims .

Men of Distinction- 48th St. Theatre 4/30/53-5/2/53. Unanimous set of pan notices filed against new play by Richard Condon produced by Chandler Cowles and Martin Gabel,which lasted only 4 performances. Timely is about best NY critics could say about script which may or may not have been based on the recent Jelke scandle case. Bad jokes and worse characters were major complaints. Funke,Times,wrote one of the most violent,charging that play contained not a single individual with a justifiable claim to intelligence, respectability or humaneness. What makes matters worse,he concluded,was that there was no discernible purpose for this parade of depravity. Chapman,News,added that comedy was desperate,tasteless and witless.Cast headed by Robert Preston,David Burns and Jean Carson weren't blamed at all. Sheaffer, Eagle,thought script timely and perhaps sometimes funny enough to turn into a hit, though from the critical viewpoint he noted humor had subtlety of a comic strip. David Ffolkes' living room,all in red velvet and purple, [illegible]

' Off Broadway '

Future plans for Circle-in-the Square include a straight play by Gian Carlo Menotti written especially for the group, a revival of Tennessee Williams' The Battle of Ages, and a program of one act plays by William Faulkner, Arthur Miller and Carson McCullers. Several of these will play at group's Philadelphia showcase before NY try.

Monday's Heroes ends 3 month run at Grenwich Mews May 10...Blackfriars close Angelic Doctor May 10...Equity Library Theatre presents Hobson's Choice at Lenox Hill Playhouse May 6-10...Journeymen present Love In Two Moods twin bill of Wilde's "The Birthday of the Infanta" and Strindberg's "Mistress Julie" at Studio Theatre, 121 W 54 May 8-9.

Two programs in honor of the 25th anniversary of the Neighborhood Playhouse interested NY drama critics. Mandragola, drama by Machiavelli which has never been staged in our language, interested Bentley, New Republic, as a masterpiece of a school of drama that we do ill to forget. While Rice, Post, enjoyed Arnold Sundgaard's lyric drama Hide and Seek with music by Robert Bollard, which was commissioned for the festivities.

Originals Only credited with having one of their best ideas in presenting Saturday midnight readings from plays and poems under title of "3". Unharried and soothing, event aims at calming the nerves after a frantic week. Post

' Vaudeville '

First 8 act program at Palace aft er successful Danny Kaye two-a-day run welcomed by Variety reporter and Quinn, Mirror. Former noted program constitutes good variety, with pace and solid playing values..."Saludos Amigos" revue at Music Hall drew split trade press notices. Smith, Billboard, praised show heavy on sight values, but Hift, Variety, considered it oddly uneven that only sporadically catches the usual sparkle of the Hall spectacles. Both enjoyed Calgary Brothers comedy act.

' TV & Radio Drama Notes '

CBS TV Omnibus, which closed season with full length production of Shaw's Arms and the Man, will produce several complete Shaw plays next season...Rex Harrison and Lilli Palmer will present an adaption of Ferenc Molnar's The Guardsman on ABC Radio Playhouse next fall...US Steel is considering a TV version of its "Theatre Guild on the Air" radio program...NBC TV Life In NY Series will be devoted to show business, series starts May 10.

NBC TV $175,000 production of Hamlet with its all star cast saluted on Herald Tribune editorial page as an achievement far above the customary run of TV fare and as a demonstration that TV is aware of the challenge it faces. But playing of singing commercials during station breaks reminded audience that it was still TV. Watts, Post, sole drama critic to note production, wished TV producers had left in original first scene of Play.

' Theatre Book Notes '

Harrigan and Hart, famous comedy team of the 1880's will be subject of new theatre book by A.J. Kahn, Jr. soon to be published by Random House...Two book publishers, Hermitage House and Harper and Brothers, have taken their fight over who has rights to Ethel Barrymore's autobiography to New York State Supreme Court...Eva Le Gallienne's second volume of autobiography With A Quiet Heart", published by Viking, presents the famous actress-manager in a mellow mood, notes Down, Variety..."From the Modern Repertoire: Series One and Series Two", edited by Bentley, New Republic and published by Indiana University Press, recommended to advance acting groups looking for challenging material by Hewes, SRL.

' Theatre Film Notes '

Ron Randall will portray Cole Porter in special sequence in MGM Kiss Me Kate. ...Guys and Dolls producers opened talks with Sam Goldwyn on possible 3 D version.

' Green Room Department '

CITY CENTER FUNDS...Two different reasons for giving donations,whether large or small,noted by Watts,Post, and Times editorial page. Former admitted that there have been times when he didn't think highly of the job being done there, but it would be,he feels, a serious loss to the local drama if the civic institution went out of existence. Times editorial reminds that the City Center of Music and Drama,Inc, 130 W 56,is self supporting and has never received any governmental subsidy or any private endowment. Group has offered the only repertory theatre in the US for classical drma. If prices are to be kept within reach of all,editorial concludes,this institution must have help. The goal is $200,000.

CONSOLATION PRIZE...Producers of A Date With April may have noticed opening night, points out NBC Critic At Large Leon Pearson,that the new comedy introducing Constance Bennett to NY tickled the risibilities of a light hearted audience. But then it ran head on into the stone wall of critical opposition,broadcaster explained. Only consolation from set of condemning notices was the review filed by AP Mark Barron who said play was "sparkling". Wire service critic has found a live and let live philosphy toward play reviewing, and is ,Pearson believes,one of the few of the "Lord High Executioners who is aware that Broadway is made up of many audiences,of many levels,with an audience for every play.

AWARD MID-SEASON...Decision of 4 of the NY Drama Critics Circle to abstain from voting was tabbed intellectual snobbery and of no value whatever to the stage by Chapman,News. All the critics have written with great enthusiasm about many offerings this season and this act of suddenly turning coy and choosy is more than slightly pretentious. The group was organized,he reminds, because the critics felt the Pulitzers were going to the wrong plays. Circle was organized to meet and vote every year,not to wait for great plays.

ANTI AWARD...New high or low in award giving detailed by Sheaffer,Eagle, who for "obvious" reasons omitted the names. But one big publicity release told the story of the award of 2 NY box office men who received the 1953 Award of a restaurant as the "Politest Box Office Staff on Broadway." Show,restaurant and all prizes were clients of the same press agent.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Trend of on stage heroines kicking off her shoes should be stopped because the human foot is just plain ugly,charges Chapman,News... Why doesn't Equity,with an assist from the League of NY Theatres,the Broad way Association,the hotels and the night clubs of NYC stage a super and continuous cavalcade of entertainment to attract visitors to the city... NY City Council urged to chuck its indecision on passing the theatre code amendments into the nearest ashcan,by News editorial page. The new building code is long overdue,it should be adopted without further delay.

' NYC Theatre News Round Up '

The Fourposter closed after 632 performances,Sylvia Sidney and Romney Brent composed the final cast...The Pink Elephant closed after 5 performances, A Date With April lasted 13...Masquerade,which was to mark NY debut in new play by Veronica Lake folded in Philadelphia...William Warfield in dispute with Porgy and Bess producers over new contract limited his concert tours during show's run...Lionel Barrymore to narrate An Evening With Victor Herbert next season...Wonderful Town cast and staff guests of Drama Desk May 11,annual elections of group also to be held.

' Critics Choice Of Current Shows '

Critics Choice summarizes the views of NYC daily,weekly,trade journal and broadcaster critics on current Broadway shows. Percentages refer to number of "Pro" reviews filed from 14 NYC daily and weekly critics of importance. "Pro" refers to reviews where critic recommends event for an entertaining or stimulating evening in the theatre. Ratings of reviews from NYC dailies and weeklies appear in alternate weeks. THIS WEEK WEEKLIES.

RAVES

Beatrice Lillie	100%	7 Pro 10/2/52	Crucible	84%	6 Pro Con-Time 1/22/53
Dial M for Murder	100%	7 Pro 10/29/52	Guys & Dolls	93%	6 Pro Con-Nation 11/24/53
Misalliance	100%	7 Pro 2/18/53	The King & I	93%	6 Pro Con- Nation 3/2/51
The Moon Is Blue	100%	7 Pro 3/18/53	My 3 Angels	73%	6 Pro Con- Cue 3/11/53
Porgy & Bess	100%	7 Pro 3/19/53	Picnic	84%	6 Pro Con- Time 2/19/53
Wonderful Town	100%	7 Pro 2/25/53	7 Year Itch	84%	6 Pro-Con Time 11/20/52
			South Pacific	93%	6 Pro Con Time 4/7/49
			Time of Cuckoo	73%	6 Pro Con Time 10/15/52

MIXED

Love of 4 Colonels	73%	5 Pro- Con- New Yorker,Nation 1/15/53
Time Out For Ginger	65%	5 Pro- Con- New Yorker, Cue 11/26/52
Children's Hour	73%	4 Pro- Con- Cue, Nation, New Republic 12/18/52
Hazel Flagg	80%	4 Pro- Con- Cue, Nation, New Republic 2/11/53

CONS

Fifth Season	59%	3 Pro- Con- Time, Newsweek,Nation, New Republic
Camino Real	50%	3 Pro- Con- Time, Newsweek,NONE YET-Nation,New Republic
Wish You Were Here	7%	No Pros-7 Cons.

' NYC Theatre Exhibits '

Theatre Guild 35th Anniversary. 25 W 53. Mon to Fri 2 to 5 PM. To May 10.
Gertrude Lawrence Exhibit. Mus. Of City of NY. 5th & 100 Daily 10 to 5. To Aug 30.

' Pros & Cons by TMK '

That ambitious Greenwich Village arena group Circle-In-The-Square has staged an interesting revival of Truman Capote's The Grass Harp. First and only play by young novelist flopped last year on Broadway inspite of one man promotion campaign staged by Times' Atkinson. Shorn of the all star Broadway cast and the most beautiful onstage tree seen in years,the play contains some fine poetic passages about some very special gentle people. Beautifully lighted, staged production loses some of its impact due to overlong first act and some physical miscastings. But play is a most for all who missed it last season.

"Drama Desk", the organization of NY theatre editors and reporters,which has attained a certain measure of fame by being the only drama group never to give an award to anybody for anything,lost its amateur status. The Theatre Guild, celebrating its 35th anniversary,presented group with testimonal scroll and cocktail party for their diligent,tireless and accurate efforts for theatre. Scroll,by the way,will probably reside at Rosoff's,the kindly restaurant which has catered to the whims of the group.